

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 L-02 FCC-01 CCO-00 CIAE-00

OTPE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 OC-05 USIA-06 COME-00 BIB-01

/040 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:PKBULLEN:GCB

APPROVED BY NEA:HHSAUNDERS

EB/TT/TD:GLHUFFCUTT

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R 192330Z MAY 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EWWT

SUBJECT: BOYCOTT OF RCA GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. RCA GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS IS ONE OF THREE AMERICAN RECORD CARRIERS FOR TELEGRAM AND TELEX TRAFFIC, OTHERS BEING ITT AND WESTERN UNION INTERNATIONAL. RCA IS ON ARAB BOYCOTT LIST BECAUSE OF SMALL QUANTITY RCA RECORDS PRODUCED IN ISRAEL UNDER LICENSE, AND RCA/GC BOYCOTTED BECAUSE OF BOYCOTT OF PARENT FIRM. NEITHER ITT NOR WESTERN UNION INTERNATIONAL IS ON BOYCOTT LIST.

2. RCA/GC HAS SOUGHT DEPTSTATE ASSISTANCE WITH SARG TOWARD OBTAINING DIRECT LINK TO SYRIA. AT SAME TIME, ITT AND WUI HAVE PROPOSAL FOR AUTHORIZATION OF DIRECT SERVICE TO SYRIA

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UNDER CONSIDERATION BY FCC, BUT FCC IS RELUCTANT TO APPROVE

BECAUSE OF ARAB BOYCOTT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THEIR COMPETITOR, RCA/GC. DEPARTMENT WISHES TO SUPPORT INTERESTS OF ALL THREE FIRMS. BELIEVE FIRST STEP SHOULD BE EFFORT IN RESPONSE TO RCA/GC REQUEST, SINCE PRECIPITATE APPROVAL OF ITT AND WUI SERVICE COULD BE EXPECTED TO FORECLOSE WHATEVER CHANCE RCA/GC MIGHT HAVE OF OBTAINING SERVICE TO SYRIA. IF EFFORTS ON RCA/GC'S BEHALF NONPRODUCTIVE WITHIN REASONABLE TIME, FCC WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO APPROVE PROPOSED ITT AND WUI SERVICE.

3. RCA/GC ACTUALLY HAS DIRECT TRAFFIC LINKS WITH EGYPT, LEBANON, JORDAN PLUS SEMIDIRECT SERVICE TO ALGERIA, TUNISIA AND KUWAIT. RCA/GC BOYCOTTED IN SYRIA, WITH SYRIA MESSAGES CURRENTLY GOING INDIRECT TO USA VIA EUROPE. SYRIA HAS RECENTLY DECIDED TO OPERATE TO USA VIA SATELLITE USING JORDAN EARTH STATION, THOUGH THIS NOT STARTED YET.

4. RCA/GC WOULD LIKE EMBASSY TO MAKE LOW-KEY APPROACH TO SYRIAN AUTHORITIES ON ITS BEHALF TO ENCOURAGE RELAXATION OF BOYCOTT, EITHER THROUGH ABOVE-BOARD ESTABLISHMENT OF DIRECT RCA/GC SERVICE TO SYRIA OR THROUGH SOME ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD GIVE EQUIVALENT SERVICE WITH SOMEONE OTHER THAN RCA/GC PRESENTING THE BILLS TO SYRIAN PTT. RCA/GC HAS IN PAST DEALT WITH PTT ON THIS ISSUE, BUT PTT DEFERRED TO "GOVERNMENT" OVER BOYCOTT ISSUE AND AGAIN REFUSED ESTABLISH DIRECT LINK LAST FALL. RCA/GC UNSURE WHETHER "GOVERNMENT" MEANS MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS OR SOMETHING HIGHER.

5. IF IN AMBASSADOR'S JUDGMENT SUCH AN APPROACH WOULD NOT BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, DEPARTMENT BELIEVES IT SHOULD BE MADE. WE LEAVE TO AMBASSADOR'S DISCRETION THE LEVEL AND TIMING OF APPROACH AND HOW BEST TO BROACH SUBJECT WITH SYRIANS. WOULD SUGGEST THAT MAIN THRUST BE EMPHASIS ON APOLITICAL NATURE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS. USG HAS ALWAYS SOUGHT TO KEEP BASIC INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FREE FROM POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS, INCLUDING BOYCOTTS. WE CONTINUED DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS TO PRC AND CUBA DURING PERIODS WHEN WE HAD A BOYCOTT ON OTHER KINDS OF DEALINGS WITH THOSE COUNTRIES. WE HOPE SYRIA CAN DO LIKEWISE AND DEAL WITH ALL THREE US RECORD CARRIERS. PERHAPS SYRIANS

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COULD GET TOGETHER WITH RCA/GC AND WORK OUT SOME ARRANGEMENT TO PERMIT RCA/GC DIRECT SERVICE. INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TELECOMMUNICATION, BOYCOTTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAY 1975
Decapton Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE116745
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: PKBULLEN:GCB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750176-0544
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750538/aaaabico.tel
Line Count: 109
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 AUG 2003 by MartinML>; APPROVED <01 DEC 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BOYCOTT OF RCA GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS
TAGS: EWWT
To: DAMASCUS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006